

Dear Members of the Appropriations Committee:

I am the Executive Director of Madonna Place, a medium sized non-profit that serves over 2600 children and families each year from primarily New London County. I believe there must be a way to solve our budget crisis without dismantling programs that are effective and cost efficient. In your deliberations, I ask you to keep in mind – what kind of State do you want to live in and what do you want for our children and families?

**I am urging you to reject Governor Rell's proposed** Fiscal Year 2011 state budget. I encourage you to carefully examine the proposed cuts to human services made the Governor, who is again trying to make the budget balance by cutting successful programs without considering the economic, or societal consequences of her actions.

Specifically I ask you to not allow the Governor to reduce funding to the Children's Trust Fund programs, which are now funded under the Department of Social Services.

The Children's Trust Fund gives funding to provide programs that prevent child abuse and neglect. These are research-based programs that engage families before a crisis occurs and have proven results. They are cost effective – much less expensive than intervention by DCF and certainly at much less of an emotional impact to the child, family and society.

Investing in fathers and families is prudent as well. Funding from the Trust Fund supports our Fatherhood Program. We promote positive, fully responsible fatherhood involvement, which means fathers who are seeing their children, paying their child support, and getting along with their child's mother. Research shows that children who have involved fathers are less likely to get involved with drug abuse, the legal system, have trouble in school or become pregnant as a teenager.

Although I don't profess to have any or all of the answers to the State's budget crisis, I do know that short-term slash and cut spending cuts and smoke and mirror revenue approaches are not the answer. I believe that smarter spending alternatives could be explored – such as :

- money follows the person initiatives,
- Moving from prisons to community treatment
- Sharing town services, reducing duplication
- State agency collaboration, consolidation
- Energy conservation in state facilities
- Partnering with state/local employees to reduce personnel costs (e.g. health insurance purchasing pools)
- Commission on Enhancing Agency Effectiveness

State Government and Municipalities should look to many nonprofits as role models for the above – we have been accomplishing collaboration, sharing, and partnering, and doing more with less as a means of everyday survival. Just ask the agencies in Norwich who work together on a daily basis – big and small – to make things work better for the families that they serve.

I also believe that revenue planning and our tax structure needs to be retooled.

- Evaluate and adjust tax expenditures,
- Evaluate and reform the corporate tax system

- Raise Income Tax for those most able to pay,
- Delay or repeal changes to gift and estate tax
- Increase + offset sales tax (EITC & Small Business Property Tax credit)
- Decrease sales tax but broaden base
- Raise so-called "sin" taxes

Thank-you for taking the time to do this difficult work on behalf of the families and children of Connecticut.

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References: Father Facts, CT Voices for Children.